

Message Text

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42

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INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMCONSUL GOTEBOG

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, SW

SUBJECT: LIBERAL PARTY LEADER DISCUSSES RELATIONSHIPS AMONG THE
SWEDISH PARTIES

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. LIBERAL PARTY CHAIRMAN PER
AHLMARK, IN AN INTERVIEW PUBLISHED IN EXPRESSEN ON
AUGUST 29, OUTLINED THE POSITION OF THE LIBERALS
VIS-A-VIS THE SWEDISH SOCIALIST AND OPPOSITION PARTIES,
AND DESCRIBED THE MAIN ISSUES BEING ADDRESSED BY THE
LIBERAL PARTY.

2. IN RESPONSE TO THE RECURRING QUESTION OF WHETHER
THE LIBERALS WOULD FORM A GOVERNMENT WITH THE
SOCIALIST PARTIES IF ASKED, AHLMARK REPLIED WITH AN
EMPHATIC "NO. ABSOLUTELY NOT. THE IMPORTANT THING
FOR US IS THAT THEY, AFTER 45 YEARS, RELINQUISH
GOVERNMENT POWER SO THAT WE CAN PREVENT A SOCIALIST
DEVELOPMENT." HE AFFIRMED, "THAT IS A PROMISE."

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3. AHLMARK ALSO RULED OUT AN "AMALGAMATION" WITH THE

CENTER PARTY, WHICH HAD BEEN BANDIED ABOUT AFTER THE 1973 ELECTIONS, AND NOTED THAT THE CENTER PARTY'S YOUTH GROUP NOW USES THE WORD "LIBERAL" AS AN INVECTIVE. HE DECLARED THAT A LIBERAL PARTY IN SWEDEN IS TOO VALUABLE TO LOSE, AND THAT IF ONE DID NOT EXIST, HE WOULD HAVE TO CREATE ONE.

4. ASKED ABOUT WHAT THE RELATIVELY SMALL LIBERAL PARTY COULD HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH IN NON-SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT, AHLMARK EXPLAINED THAT THE LIBERALS WOULD FORCE THE OTHER PARTIES (CENTER AND MODERATE) TO BE MORE LIBERAL THAN THEY MIGHT OTHERWISE BE, AND THAT A NEW GOVERNMENT "CAN NEVER PURSUE RIGHTIST POLICIES." REMAINED THAT THE RIGHT MIGHT NOT AGREE, AHLMARK COUNTERED "THEY CAN'T DECIDE THAT. IT IS VERY CLEAR THAT CONSERVATIVE POLICIES WILL NOT COME TO BE PURSUED IN SWEDEN," AND HE ADDED THAT THE CENTER AND LIBERALS AGREE ON THIS POINT.

5. AHLMARK STATED THAT THE MAJOR ISSUES OF DISAGREEMENT WITH THE CENTER CONCERN THE QUESTIONS OF EFFECTIVE PROTECTION OF CIVIL RIGHTS AND THE EQUALITY OF THE SEXES. THE CENTER PARTY, HE POINTED OUT, WAS PRACTICALLY ALIGNED WITH THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS IN VOTING DOWN MORE STRINGENT CONSTITUTIONAL SAFEGUARDS FOR CIVIL RIGHTS.

6. IN DEFENSE AGAINST THE INTERVIEWER'S ASSERTION THAT THE LIBERALS HAVE AN IMAGE OF BEING DIVIDED, AHLMARK DECLARED THAT THEY SEE THREE ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS IN DOMESTIC POLICY: FREEDOM, SOCIAL CARE, AND EQUALITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN. "AND THERE WE ARE CLEARLY LESS DIVIDED THAN ANY OTHER SWEDISH PARTY." END UNCLASSIFIED.

7. BEGIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE. COMMENT. CONSPICIOUS BY ITS ABSENCE IS ANY MENTION OF THE MODERATE PARTY BY NAME, WHICH NO DOUBT REFLECTS AHLMARK'S DESIRE TO KEEP HIS DISTANCE FROM THE SOMEWHAT PAINFUL SUBJECT OF COOPERATION WITH THE MOST LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CONSERVATIVE PARTY. ALSO INTERESTING IS AHLMARK'S FAILURE TO INCLUDE NUCLEAR POWER AMONG THE AREAS OF DISAGREEMENT WITH THE CENTER, A SUBJECT WHICH ADDS TO THE APPEARANCE OF DIVISIVENESS AMONG THE OPPOSITION. HIS REJECTION OF COOPERATION WITH THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AFTER THE ELECTION EMPHATICALLY REPEATS PAST STATEMENTS, AND MOST OBSERVERS AGREE THAT IT WOULD BE UNTHINKABLE FOR THE LIBERALS TO DO SO. HOWEVER, SHOULD THE

OPPOSITION EMERGE WITH A MAJORITY AND SUBSEQUENTLY
FIND THEMSELVES UNABLE TO GOVERN FOR SOME REASON,
LIBERAL-SDP COOPERATION MIGHT GAIN IN ATTRACTIVENESS.
SMITH

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